

FIA to launch next step in welfare reform this summer

Summer project focus is special services for remaining welfare families without jobs

The Family Independence Agency will embark on its "Family Independence Summer Project" shortly after school gets out this summer and will continue through August.

The project, the next step in Michigan's welfare reform, is an effort aimed at Family Independence Program (FIP formerly AFDC) cases. A special, short-term project, it will be supported by \$20 million from a supplemental budget bill now being considered in the state Legislature.

"This is the next important step in welfare reform – to get the remaining FIA recipients into paying

jobs," said Governor John Engler when announcing the program March 16.

"It is an extensive project that will offer intensive, holistic services to public assistance families that have not be able to join the workforce. It even includes educational assessments for a family's children to find out where they are and where they may need help."

The project will serve nonworking FIP cases in 20 Family Independence Agency county and Wayne County district offices. It is expected to serve about 6,000 families with 10,000 children.

Adults will participate in 30

hours of programming per week.

Two of the 20 sites in the project will serve adults with disabilities.

"This will not address typical employment barriers," said Engler. "It will address family issues for adults not currently working."

For example, adults will be assessed to determine barriers to attaining self-sufficiency and independence. The project will use a holistic approach that could include parent training, literacy skill development, family health services, home management, nutrition and budgeting skills. In addition, on-site child care and tutoring services will be provided so children have safe, productive and educational summer opportunities. Families will receive transportation help necessary to participate.

Near the completion of the project, the FIA will work with Michigan Works! Agency partners to provide intensive job search, job placement and job fairs to develop employment opportunities for these families. Children in participating families can benefit from day camp experiences, summer youth employment and preschool learning programs.

"Families will receive services in their communities based on individual needs," said FIA director Douglas E. Howard. "Children will receive care and educational programming while parents are getting services. "Our goal is to use all possible community services in the short-term to work with entire

FIA Icon for April-May 2000

In this issue

Intercepted letters	page 2
From the director	page 3
75th Achiever of the Month recognized in February	page 4
FIP cases up in February, but long-term trend still downward...	page 6
Eaton County sponsors forensic interview training	page 8
FIA people making news	page 9
Electronic Benefits Transfer starting soon in Jackson County	page 10
So that's what they do up there?	page 11
Michigan Commission for the Blind 1999 awards ceremony	page 12
Michigan DDS hosts Social Security advisors	page 13
Transitional housing grants awarded to 16 agencies	page 14
Bounce back from offensive behavior	page 15
It happens every spring	page 16
Michigan gets federal transit grant for welfare to work	page 18
Counties cited for awards at director's meeting	page 19
FIA awards \$47,500 for new juvenile justice focus	page 20
HHS awards FIA \$1 million for adoption services	page 21
Warren-Conner and Redford celebrate reaching "zero"	page 22
EQUIP grants awarded, providers say they make a difference ..	page 23
Michigan "shared the warmth" in February	page 24

continues on page 7

Intercepted letters

People say the most wonderful things

From: Barbara Kamae
To: Otsego County FIS Sharon Davis

I'd like to take this time to thank you for all you have done for us in our time of need. I want to assure you the FIA was our last choice, but we did what we had to do. And I am glad it was for a very short time. Thank you for helping us get our car insurance back—every time we had to go somewhere we held our breath. Last of all I'd like to thank you for not making us feel like scum for asking for assistance. THANKS.

From: Jim Nye, FIA Outstate Operations director
To: Steve Hinckley, FIA systems

Many thanks for your latest systems help for the SER worksheet on Excel. The response from staff has been wonderful—one specialist described completing the first budget on the new worksheet as “a near religious experience.” Your innovative work demonstrates that we have the ability for systems to truly support staff work and underscores the important contributions and impact a single individual can have on this large organization.

From: Benzie-Leelanau FIA director Mary Marois
To: FIA director Douglas Howard

We are at zero in both Benzie and Leelanau for the 14th month. It is amazing what you can accomplish when you keep your focus. We have also made, for the first time in many years, a significant impact on the number of native American children that we have in foster care. The reason for this has been the “Family Group Decision Making Model” we are piloting. We have successfully reduced the number of Indian kids in care by half and have virtually stopped placing Indian kids in foster care. Keep in mind, historically, 75 to 85 percent of our kids in care were native American when our native population represented less than 2 percent of our total.

From: James L. Mitchell
To: Grand Traverse FIA director Bob Porter

Our local paper contained an article (with) criticism of treatment the writer received from personnel in an FIA office—not Grand Traverse County's. I was irritated by its tone and content. It implied that all FIA offices were staffed by incompetent and uninterested personnel. It did not match my experiences at all...with FIA as a “third party.” I was helping my sister with paperwork necessary for her efforts to get her husband covered by Medicaid. The (Grand Traverse County) receptionist (Althea Olds) was very courteous. She gave me exactly what I needed. It is sometimes difficult for me to know how to put the information correctly into forms. I called your office to talk to my brother-in-law's specialist. Nell Danielson worked patiently through the requirements. (She) allowed me to depart from the forms and use my own to convey my sister's situation. I suspect this caused her a little extra work but it made it easier for me. She handled my visit and subsequent phone calls in a very warm, professional and courteous manner. Both my sister and I are very pleased with our treatment by the friendly and competent people in your office.



FIA Icon

*a publication of Michigan's
Family Independence Agency*

John Engler, Governor

Douglas E. Howard, Director
Family Independence Agency

Karen Smith, Director
Office of Communications

Larry VanDeSande, Editor



Editorial Board

Sue Doby

*Information Technology
Management Services*

Anna Gallagher

*Office of the Director /
Deputy Director*

Julie DeHaan Horn

*Office of Reengineering
and Quality Management*

Mary Mehren

Child and Family Services

George Noonan

Field Operations

Anne Sinicropi Sigourney

Family Independence Services

Gary Swan

Office of Human Resources

Patrick Vaughan

*Budget, Analysis
and Financial Management*



From the Director

By Douglas E. Howard

Director, Family Independence Agency

Coming attractions

The announcement of our Family Independence Summer Project is the first of a number of important activities that will take place in the FIA this summer. By the time 2001 arrives, we will have concluded the summer project and expanded Project Zero statewide. There are other important events coming up this summer, as well. Here is a handful to keep in mind.

■ **Summer Project.** This special event will help up to 6,000 FIP (and SSI) families in 20 local offices overcome their personal barriers to employment and self-sufficiency. This might include barriers related to parenting and raising children, literacy, health or more. Summer project services will be delivered locally and schools will play a significant role.

■ **Project Zero.** Later this warm weather season the FIA and our partner agencies will begin expanding Project Zero to the remaining 34 counties. This will take place sequentially, with a group of counties joining each time. Because some summer project counties are slated to join Project Zero, they will connect later in the year. Our goal is to have Project Zero operating in all 83 counties by the end of the year.

■ **Electronic Benefits Transfer.** By mid-summer we expect this much-discussed delivery system to begin revolutionizing the way we deliver cash assistance benefits including food stamps. By June, we expect the pilot program to be operating in Jackson County, whose customers will begin accessing their cash assistance and food stamp benefits using a debit card. After a successful trial the program will be expanded statewide as quickly as possible.

■ **Services.** We will be promoting the concept of “balanced and restorative justice” for juvenile offenders statewide, which will be highlighted at a May conference. In addition we are developing community services for lower-risk (category 4 and 5) child protective services cases, expanding the permanency pilot in Wayne County and building domestic violence service partnerships. We are planning for the Family Reunification project, coordinated substance abuse pilots in three counties and for an early infant brain development conference that brings together public and private foster care providers and protective services workers in August.

■ **Technology.** We are working on an arrangement with Dell to replace a significant number of FIA personal computers this year. Our contract with the vendor may be finalized by the time you read this. We will continue to make upgrades to ASSIST on a quarterly basis. A March upgrade improved the process to add and remove persons from base groups. Look for similar improvements as time goes on.

■ **Disability.** A statewide Disability Resource Directory will go online at the State Library in Lansing in April. Meanwhile, Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns will carry out its Youth Leadership Conference in July and Michigan Commission for the Blind will pursue its “Vision 2020” strategic planning effort over the warm weather season.

This list is not meant to be all encompassing, but an effort to help you keep up with some of the things you might hear about in the coming months. I know the pace of change in our agency is dizzying and at times the adjustments we have to make to keep up with change are easier said than done. But I hope you will join me in seeing the summer of 2000 as one of the most exciting times in the history of our agency. With your help and dedication, I know we can make it a time none of us will forget.

75th Achiever of the Month recognized in February

**A positive attitude, flexibility, hard work, and support services – what a combination!
Oceana FIA and Michigan Works! contractor share in Mary's glory, her celebration**

By Penny Burillo, Family Independence Specialist
Oceana County Family Independence Agency
Telephone (231) 873-7221

HART, Mich.—When Mary Barnhill's summer employment job ended and her car permanently died, she had little reason to believe that in less than two months she would be working as a laboratory assistant-phlebotomist for Mercy General Health Partners at their outstation in Hart.

Mary attributes her quick success to her family, friends, family independence specialist Penny Burillo and Michigan Works! contract staffers Ed Felt, Robin Tanner, and Cathy Michlin.

The melting pot of these support agencies, along with Mary's own pleasant personality and work ethic, have earned her recognition as the Family Independence Agency's Achiever of the Month Award. A recognition event was held in Oceana County on Feb. 18 allowing all of Mary's supporters to share in her success.

Many helped celebrate

Among the dignitaries on hand to celebrate Mary's success were FIA director Douglas E. Howard, state Representative David Mead of Frankfort, Oceana County FIA director Nancy Sterk, Oceana County FIA Board vice-chairperson John Neidow, and Ed Felt, director of the Oceana County Office of Employment and Training.

"This month, I have the privilege of recognizing Mary Barnhill for her motivation and determination to become independent from the welfare system," said Howard when opening the ceremony. "Today she



Mary Barnhill

will become the seventy-fifth recipient of the Achiever of the Month Award."

The award was established in October 1993 to recognize the contributions and achievements of participants in Michigan's reform initiative, *To Strengthen Michigan Families*. Every month the Family Independence Agency recognizes a public assistance recipient or former recipient who has been successful on their road to self-sufficiency.

"It is gratifying to be part of an occasion that acknowledges the progress of individuals like Mary," said Howard. "Too often we applaud success with little or no thought to the journey that leads to a victory."

Something about Mary

Mary is a single mom raising her four-year-old son, Trent. Mary acknowledges Trent as her driving force in striving toward a career that will someday result in permanent employment with full benefits. Unfortunately, Trent was ill on the day of Mary's ceremony. Trent and Mary's mother, Sherry Barnhill—who is Trent's caregiver, were unable to attend the ceremony. Trent

had expressed great anticipation about attending his Mom's recognition event as he had planned to wear his first "man suit" to the event.

Mary was asked to summarize her contact with the Family Independence Agency in October 1999.

"I was ashamed (to apply at FIA)," she said. "But I knew I had to be strong and swallow my pride. Everyone was very nice to me, they acted like it was OK to ask for help."

Upon hearing of Mary's comments Oceana County director Nancy Sterk said: "It pleases me greatly that Mary's feels her contacts with our agency have been non-threatening and resulted in a rewarding experience. It further supports the faith I have in this office's staff.

"We see our role here as a combination facilitator, coach, and cheerleader."

Along the same line, state FIA director Howard made a similar observation.

"The achiever ceremony is important because it involves special people like Mary with our FIA staff so they can see what they do *does* make a difference," he said.

Into the world of work

After Mary's Family Independence Program, food stamp and Medicaid cases were opened in October 1999, she was referred to the Work First program administered by the Michigan Works! Agency. Mary is generous in her praise of the efforts put forth on her behalf by Work First counselors.

"They helped me write a resume, got me a pager for job contacts since I had no phone, paid mileage while I interviewed," she said. "They helped me with work clothes once I had secured employment and contributed toward the purchase of a vehicle."

Michigan Works! Agency director Felt said he thinks Mary would have made a success of herself with or without their help because Mary displayed the drive and initiative to help herself.

Penny Burillo, Mary's family independence specialist, recommended Mary for the Achiever Award.

"Mary had absolutely no intention of remaining on assistance any longer than necessary to achieve her goal of permanent employment," said Burillo, who noted FIP is funded under the federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families grant. "Mary is a great example of using our agency in the manner it was in-



Penny Burillo and Mary Barnhill

tended—as temporary assistance." While Oceana county partners helped, Mary's own personality and drive should not be overlooked in this process toward self-sufficiency.

"Mary's flexibility to start work part-time, to accept substitute

work, and her ability to get along with others were dominant considerations in her hire," said her Mercy General Health Partners supervisor, Francine Lessard. "Mary has worked out very well in this position and I hope to place her in a permanent, benefited position by this fall."

Family and friends helped

Throughout all of the agency interactions Mary gives credit to her mother for emotional support.

"My mother and I are a team," said Mary. "She has helped me emotionally and she gives excellent attention to my son. She used to be a teacher so she has taught my son Trent a lot."

In addition to her mother, Mary also thanks her Aunt Anita and Uncle Larry Vollink for their financial contribution toward her auto purchase as well as for their love and support. She said friends have played a role in her success story as well.

"The president of my son's preschool, Ada Kajtazi, has picked him up for and from school when I had conflicts with work," said Barnhill.

"I have been truly blessed with the people in my life and I have learned a lot about humanity and humility. They are lessons I hold dear to my heart."

More tributes

Mary received multiple accolades from guests speaking at the ceremony. Rep. Mead presented Mary with an official resolution he introduced in the state Legislature on her behalf. Speaking for the county board, vice-chairperson Neidow gave Mary a \$50 gift certificate for her accomplishments. Howard issued a plaque commemorating the ceremony and another \$50 gift certificate.

Although not present, Mary's son Trent shared in the merriment and goodwill. He received a large helium balloon, candy and Oceana County FIA's recent "Cheeri-Os" award.

The Cheeri-Os award, a Frisbee, is a symbol issued by director Howard to Project Zero counties with consecutive months at zero. As of February 2000, Oceana County had reached zero in eight consecutive months, a time when all employable adults had earned income. Who better to enjoy this award than the young man whose mother personifies the goals of this initiative?

Later in his address Howard elaborated on achievements in Michigan and Oceana County.

"In 1992 about 15 percent of our Family Independence Program families reported earned income," he said. "Today, 60 percent of our FIP families report earning."

"At the end of January 2000 in Oceana County, 86 percent of target FIP cases had earned income and in the past year 180 targeted FIP cases have closed due to earnings."

Mary's Family Independence Program case closed in December 1999. She currently receives food stamps, child care payments, and transitional Medicaid that continues for one year after termination of a FIP grant due to earnings.

Mary hopes to continue working as a lab assistant and then in a few years she would like to return to school with the goal of becoming a kindergarten teacher. It's not hard to picture Mary succeeding at this next step along her road to self-sufficiency.

■ **Oceana County FIA family independence manager Sherry Saunders contributed to this report.**



FIP cases up third straight February

Historic seasonal increase strikes again but long-term caseload still declining

Project Zero sites help long-term case trend continue downward

Family Independence Summer Project coming

Gov. Engler announced March 21 the February 2000 Family Independence Program average caseload increased slightly, but continues at low levels not seen since the 1970s. In February, the average daily caseload was 74,989. Of those about 38,000 were child only or deferred cases, meaning only about 37,000 cases represented adults expected to work.

This is the third consecutive year when the February caseload number increased. Engler said it is a seasonal trend and not an indication the welfare case trend is reversing.

"The new century dawned

with more former public assistance recipients in the work force than ever before," said Engler. "Unemployment in Michigan is lower today than anytime since we have statistics on it and welfare customers are sharing in that success."

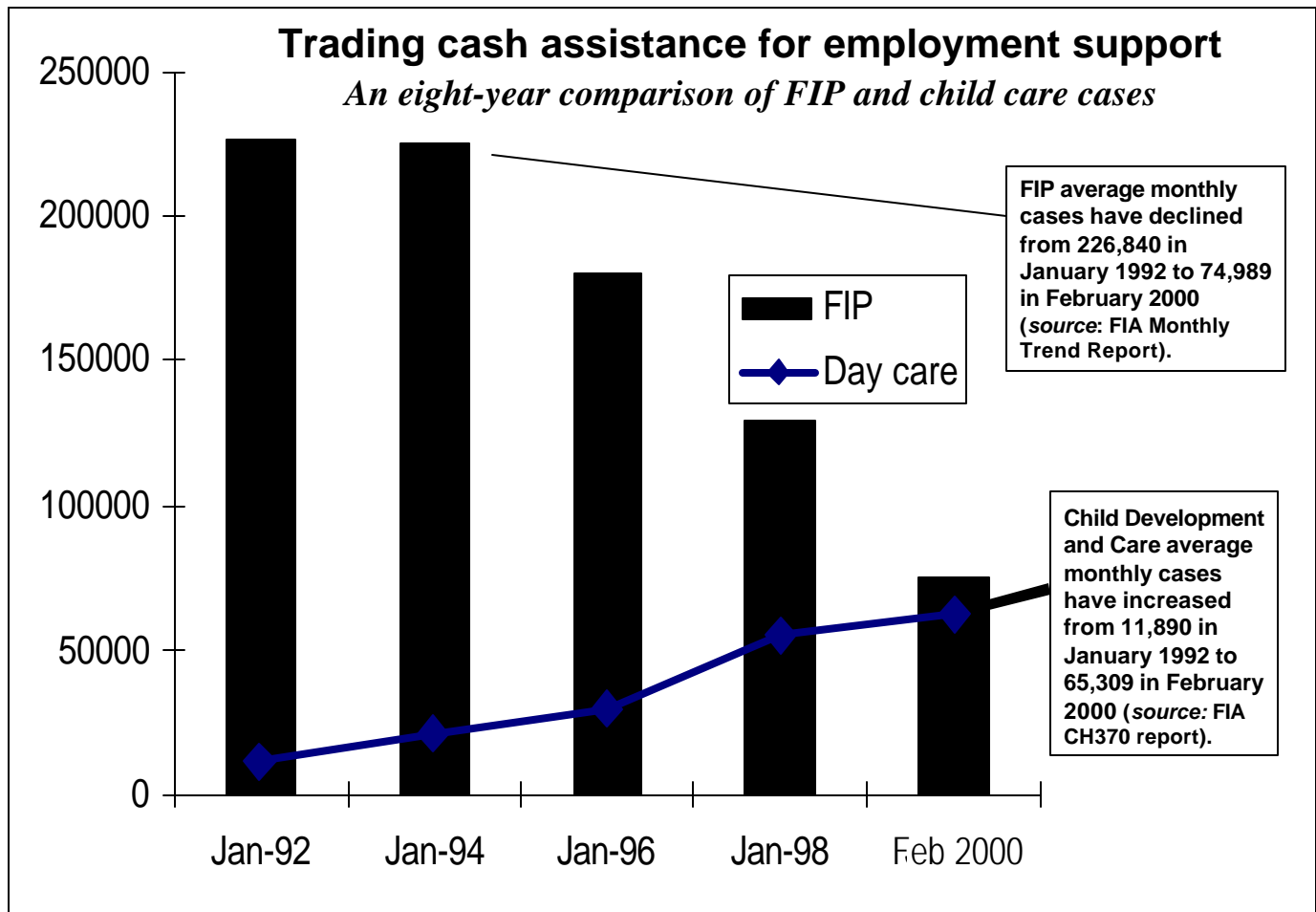
The Family Independence Program caseload has declined in 68 of the previous 71 months. "We want to continue our remarkable efforts in this area and ensure that everyone who can work is working," said Engler. "Our new Family Independence Summer Project will continue our success as the next step in welfare reform."

Even with the case increase each of the last three years in February, The FIP caseload has declined by 67 percent since March 1994 when it totaled 226,863 cases, the highest number in recent years.

"We are continuing to eliminate barriers to employment for our customers," said FIA director Douglas E. Howard. "This is due to our continuing collaboration and support from partners in the local communities."

Howard said part of the solution is success in Project Zero sites. A collaborative project where

continues on page 7



Family Independence Summer Project *from page 1*

families and add new services that may become necessary. In some cases we anticipate local school systems may act as an umbrella for services, especially for children."

FIA county and district offices expected to participate in the Family Independence Summer Project include: Calhoun, Genesee, Ingham, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Macomb, Muskegon, Oakland, Saginaw and Washtenaw counties and the Wayne County FIA Greenfield-Joy,

Inkster, Schoolcraft-Stansbury, Glendale-Trumbull, Hamtramck, Highland Park, Medbury-Concord and McNichols-Goddard districts. These offices will work with community service providers to finalize their local design. Most of the Wayne County districts serve persons in Detroit.

In addition the Kent and Berrien county FIA offices will serve persons with disabilities, mainly

Supplemental Security Income recipients, who wish to access community services through the project and join the work force. The disability aspect will be voluntary, while participants in the project will be required to complete the program as part of their Work First obligation.

Based on current caseloads this would be the number of cases served if the project began March 16:

FIA County or District	Family Cases	Children	Disability Cases	Children
Berrien County			394	688
Calhoun County	53	117		
Genesee County	342	670		
Ingham County	211	467		
Jackson County	102	209		
Kalamazoo County	84	183		
Kent County			761	1,256
Macomb County	76	144		
Muskegon County	310	597		
Oakland County	50	88		
Saginaw County	442	903		
Washtenaw County	93	176		
Wayne: Greenfield-Joy District	399	1,020		
Wayne: Inkster	49	142		
Wayne: Schoolcraft-Stansbury	301	674		
Wayne: Glendale-Trumbull	713	1,616		
Wayne: Hamtramck	232	555		
Wayne: Highland Park	321	722		
Wayne: Medbury-Concord	332	889		
Wayne: McNichols-Goddard	228	544		
Total	4,338	9,716	1,155	1,944

Seasonal increase strikes again *from page 6*

services are designed and implemented locally, Project Zero will be expanded statewide later this year.

"The untold story about Project Zero is how success breeds continuing success," said Howard. "A number of Project Zero counties have maintained 'zero' status over a lengthy period, some more than six months."

Public assistance recipients and other low-income families qualify for employment support services in Michigan that enable them to become self-sufficient. February data show 65,309 families received child care assistance from FIA, representing 121,674 children. Of those families, 18,541 are currently or were formerly receiving FIP.

During February, 48,440 food stamp households were working and received cash instead of food stamps. To be eligible for "cash out" a food stamp recipient must work and earn at least \$350 monthly for three successive months. Families receiving the benefits get a check instead of food stamp coupons.



Eaton County forensic interview training held

By Jan Baszler, Program Manager
Eaton County Family Independence Agency
Telephone (517) 543-5638

CHARLOTTE—Eaton County hosted a specialized child abuse investigation training program last Dec. 2-3. The Eaton County MIT—Multi-Agency Investigation Team—sponsored the training. The featured speaker, Michigan State Police Trooper Geoffrey Flohr, focused on using forensic interviewing when conducting child abuse investigations.

Eaton County FIA protective services worker Mary Uerling chairs the county's MIT. Uerling, a protective services worker with 24 years of experience, invited Flohr to present a short segment on the merits of forensic interviewing at the regularly scheduled MIT meeting.

Eaton County Prosecutor Jeffrey Sauter was impressed by the merits of the forensic interviewing process and secured funding to pay for the two-day training. The Eaton County Sheriff's Department provided refreshments and Eaton County FIA paid for printing of training materials and flyers.

The forensic interviewing protocol was developed by Debra Poole of Central Michigan University in conjunction with the FIA and Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice. The goal of a forensic interview is to obtain a statement from a child in a developmentally sensitive, unbiased and truth-seeking manner that will support accurate and fair decision-making in the criminal justice and child welfare systems.

Eaton County's training session was well attended by county law enforcement agencies including representatives from police departments in Grand Ledge, Charlotte, Eaton Rapids and Potterville, the



At left: Charlotte Police Det. Robert Kellogg (left) and State Police Trooper Geoffrey Flohr were presenters at the forensic interviewing training program, attended by Eaton County CPS employees (below). Kellogg is a member of the Eaton County Multi-Agency Investigation Team.



Eaton County Sheriff's Department and Michigan State Police. Attendees included representatives from the Eaton Intermediate School District, the University of Michigan's Child Protection Team and CPS staff from both Barry and Eaton counties.

Det. Robert Kellogg of the Charlotte Police Department, who is a member of the MIT, began the program saying Eaton County was a leader in developing the law enforcement-FIA investigation protocol. He said the protocol helped improve cooperation between law enforcement and CPS staff and led to more effective investigations.

Flohr provided training on the forensic interview model. He de-

scribed his own years of frustration trying to interview child abuse victims and trying to secure needed evidence. He said he felt rejuvenated and increasingly effective as he started using forensic interviewing. Flohr gave examples of how to use forensic interviewing methods and trainees participated in eight different mock interviews to gain experience using the interviewing techniques.

Flohr also trained participants in the stages of the child sexual assault process. "Child sexual abuse is a process," he said. "Protect the child, gain their trust, help them come to terms, catch the offender, save the next child."

■ Special thanks to Mary Uerling for help organizing this excellent training program.

FIA people making news

Recently appointed Zone 3 manager **Kathryn McDonald** was appointed co-leader for the FIA Family Independence Summer



Kathryn McDonald

Project with **Sandra Traylor** of Wayne County FIA. FIA director Douglas E. Howard announced the pair would lead the program.



Sandra Traylor

Nye. The summer project will serve certain public assistance families, helping them join the work force through new and/or more intensive family services.

"**Janet Strobe** has been selected to provide leadership in Zone 3 while Kathie is temporarily reassigned," said Nye. Strobe is director of the Ingham County Family Independence Agency office. "I am pleased to have her join the Outstate Operations management team."

Ken Theis was appointed FIA deputy chief information officer effective March 1, 2000. "I am pleased to announce that Ken Theis accepted a position within the FIA Information Technology Management Services Administration," said **Mike Scieszka**, FIA acting chief information officer. "Ken is being assigned to

work with the existing Child Support Enforcement System-High Volume Assessment-Michigan State Disbursement Unit team."

Wayne County FIA recently shifted personnel after the appointment of former Warren-Conner district manager **Wanda Bailey** to Zone VII manager, the retirement of **Phil Kwierant** in the Redford district office and Traylor's appointment. Changes include: **Roger Christ** as manager at the Forest-Ellery district; **Margaret Lewis** as manager in Kercheval-Townsend; **Sharon**



Janet Burch



Janet Strobe

announced the appointments of **Don Dersnah** as acting director of Ingham County FIA and **Rita Riddle** as acting Zone 4 AP specialist. "Don has been deputy director at Ingham since March 1999," she said. "Rita currently is a FIM at Ingham County who has worked in the assistance payments area for 27 years."

On Feb. 23 Burch announced **Pat Bellinger** was selected acting

Jackson as manager at Warren-Conner; **Robert Wylie** as Redford district manager. Wylie is acting manager at Redford while Traylor heads the summer project.

On Feb. 29 Zone 4 manager **Janet Burch**

director of Lapeer County FIA. On March 22 Burch announced the appointment of **Dave Smith** as acting director of Arenac County FIA, replacing **Bill Thorp**, who retired. "Dave has worked at Arenac County since January 1974," said Burch. "His extensive knowledge and understanding of Arenac County's history and operations will be of great benefit."

Zone 3 manager McDonald announced Feb. 25 the appointment of **Sharon Christensen** as acting director of Isabella County FIA. Christensen, who is Mecosta County FIA director, will perform additional duties on a temporary basis. "With dissolution of the dual Gratiot-Isabella county organizational structure it became necessary to make a temporary appointment," said McDonald. "Sharon has agreed to provide leadership to the Isabella team until a permanent director is selected."

Cynthia Osga, an auditor with



Sharon Christensen

FIA Administration on Budget, Analysis and Financial Management, will become vice president for the Ohio-Michigan chapter of the Association of Government Accountants on July 1. The Ohio-Michigan region is one of 16 in AGA and represents six local chapters in the two states. The position is a liaison between chapters and the national organization. The AGA is a professional organization dedicated to enhancing public financial management and ensuring compliance and accountability of public funds.

Electronic Benefits Transfer starting soon

**Successful Jackson County pilot will lead to statewide expansion
Eventually many FIA cash programs can be similarly delivered**

By Dave Mork, Project Director
Electronic Benefits Program
Telephone (517) 335-6015

Electronic Benefits Transfer, or EBT, is a process that will change the delivery method of food stamp and cash assistance benefits for our customers.

The Michigan EBT program will eliminate paper food stamp coupons and paper checks by using an online system similar to commercial debit point of sale services. This is the same process you may use to pay for merchandise and services with your ATM card. Food stamp and Family Independence Program benefits will be electronically transferred to an account linked to a customer's debit card. This debit card will be called the "Bridge" card.

EBT is required for the food stamp program by the federal welfare reform act of 1996. It has been implemented in more than 20 states. In fact, more than 50 percent of all food stamp benefits nationwide are now being delivered via EBT. Like Michigan, many states are choosing to provide their cash programs via EBT as well. This provides better customer service by offering both benefits through a single process.

The leading contractor in EBT services is Citicorp Service Inc. It is their proven system that Michigan will be using to implement EBT. They have been working with both FIA systems and policy staff to make necessary modifications to their system in order to meet Michigan's unique needs and to help us understand what changes in our systems



Advanced Technology & Systems

ASSIST • SWSS • EBT • MICSES
INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Chief Information Officer

and policy are necessary to operate this program. In addition to developing our system, Citibank Services Inc. will provide a 7-day 24-hour customer service help desk available in multiple languages to assist our customers. This will begin in May 2000.

EBT is currently in the user "acceptance testing" phase. A number of FIA central administrative and pilot county staff—EBT is being piloted in Jackson County—began acceptance testing in mid-March. This phase will continue until the end of April and will include a review by USDA Food and Nutrition Services in late April.

In May, after federal approval, we will begin mailing training pamphlets and the Bridge card to FIA customers in Jackson County. Customers who want additional hands-on EBT training will be able to attend voluntary training classes scheduled during May. These classes and the training pamphlets will be available in Spanish and Arabic. Classroom services will meet the special needs of people with disabilities, as well. Customers who are comfortable with training material they receive by mail will not be required to attend hands-on training.

The rollout schedule calls for the pilot to begin in Jackson County

on June 1. Following successful completion of the pilot, statewide rollout will begin for groups of counties in October 2000 and

continue until all customers are converted to EBT during mid-2001. Training materials will be mailed and "hands-on" training will be available in the month prior to implementation of EBT in each county. We currently plan to expand first to counties west of Jackson County. A complete schedule will be published soon. Please watch for our planned EBT information location on the FIA-Net (FIA Intranet website), which will include this information. Once statewide the total population participating in EBT will be approximately 300,000 including 75,000 cash assistance customers.

Most customers surveyed in states with EBT have reported the system to be a safer, more dignified means of obtaining cash and food stamp benefits. The FIA believes this process will provide better customer service than our current paper system. The Michigan Family Independence Agency plans to continue working closely with customer advocates, retailers, and financial institutions to make this conversion as efficient as possible for our customers. If you have questions or comments, please direct them to the EBT Project Office at 517-335-6015.



So that's what they do up there?

An FIA field worker's experience in Central Office

What seems like folly in the field looks a little different up close

By Douglas W. Marchyok

Livingston County Family Independence Agency

Telephone (517) 548-0272

This is my story about an experience in Central Office. I am employed in Livingston County FIA as a child protective services worker. I have been in the field for 15 years and prior to that I had worked in institutional services at Maxey Boys Training School in Whitmore Lake.

I am also one of 21 FIA child welfare employees who were chosen by their local county offices to have the opportunity to earn a master's degree in social work at Michigan State University with a child welfare specialty. The FIA Child and Family Services program office also supports this effort through a 90 percent tuition reimbursement arrangement.

One of the degree requirements is to complete field practice in an area of child welfare in which we had no prior experience. For my last year I requested and was granted the opportunity to complete my field experience in the FIA Children's Protective Services Program and Policy Development in Central Office, Lansing. My work was performed under the supervision of JoAnne Nagy.

Prior to this field practice, my experience with Central Office was much like any other field worker's experience. I stayed as far away from Central Office as I could, as I feared that if I got too cozy with those "people" I might become contaminated or become too much like one of "them". For a long time I enjoyed my independence from Central Office—only grudgingly complying with policy mandates and looking for loopholes in order to make the policies and procedures—that

must have been developed by people who did not have a clue—work for our customers in the field.

Likewise, the periodic training I had to attend did not seem to have much to do with what I did in the field.

It only served to convince me that "someone up there" in Central Office must not have much respect for what we in the field had to endure.

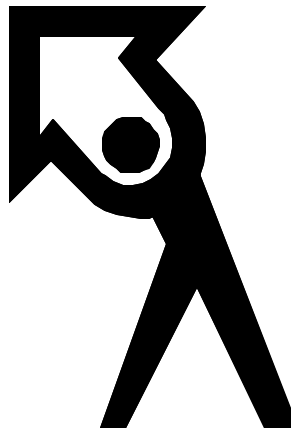
Since being here I have had my eyes opened. Not only were my prior conceptions faulty, Central Office Child and Family Services Administration is filled with many individuals that care about not only what they do but also how what they do affects the field. During my time in Central Office JoAnne has taken me to legislative hearings, budget meetings including those forecasting two years into the future, policy meetings and meetings dealing with the current crisis du jour in the office. There are many of these, considering there are 83 counties in the state with a variety of different circumstances occurring at any given time.

I have also been assigned tasks and projects that helped me understand the complexity involved in releasing information to the field. In short, having the opportunity to

observe and be a part of what goes on at Central Office has given me a much greater respect and appreciation for the job that is done here. I learned my perception of Central Office from the field was one-dimensional.

Does this knowledge make my work in the county any easier? I do not believe so, but it does give me the opportunity to understand the how, what and where of current policy and procedure and what goes into some Central Office decision-making. It is not the haphazard situation that I once thought existed. There is a great deal of planning and forecasting that happens on a daily basis. In addition, there are a great many layers of authority that must be negotiated. Even in spite of this, it is not uncommon for these plans and forecasts to go by the wayside due to a change in government policy, a change in federal mandates, a change in public perception or public opinion, a new law or more likely a combination of all these.

Given what appear to be innumerable roadblocks it would seem that the work in Central Office is often futile. Possibly some may see it that way. However I prefer to look at the work in Central Office in much the same way I view my work in the county: that there are many individuals dedicated to doing a good job and many who maintain a belief that what they are doing will have a positive impact on the lives of the citizens of this state, in particular the children that are involved in this system through no fault of their own. I appreciate having had this experience and the opportunity to share it with you.



Commission for the Blind 1999 awards ceremony

Commission announces recipients of major awards Citizens, business honored for the contributions

By Jim Buscetta

Michigan Commission for the Blind
Telephone (517) 373-0579

LANSING—At its Dec. 13 meeting Michigan Commission for the Blind presented annual awards to two individuals and a retailer for their outstanding contributions to society.

Dan Fleming was awarded the 1999 Rehabilitant of the Year Award, Elza Bryan the 1999 Blind Independent Living Client of the Year Award, and Target Inc. of Ann Arbor was presented the 1999 Employer of the Year Award. Kevin O'Callahan accepted the award for Target.

Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) has presented the awards annually since 1980 to individuals and companies who are recommended by their employees. MCB provides training programs for individuals with visual disabilities to achieve independence and/or employment. It operates programs throughout Michigan and serves about 5,000 persons annually. MCB has administrative offices in Lansing. MCB has a management board of five governor-appointed commissioners and more than 100 employees statewide. It receives federal and state funds and is administered through the FIA.

Blind Rehabilitant of the Year

Dan Fleming started his rehabilitation program more than 10 years ago. Dan not only had a vision loss but also never had a formal education. After many trials at a variety of programs he entered a literacy program that he completed in three years. With that under his belt he began the process to participate in the MCB Business Enterprise



At the MCB awards ceremony last Dec. 13 (left to right): Patrick Cannon, MCB executive director; Earl Steenstra, MCB board chairman; Steve Handschu and Velma Allen, MCB commissioners; Dan Fleming; Peeti Greene, MCB commissioner; Elza Bryan and Kevin O'Callahan of Target Inc.

Program. That program helps train individuals with vision loss to be private entrepreneurs in public and private buildings. After several years of adult education Dan was finally able to complete the prerequisite requirements to enter the Business Enterprise Program. Dan successfully completed the requirements for the program in February 1999. He started working as a substitute for the Michigan Commission for the Blind vending route in Cadillac and is now the very successful operator of the cafeteria at The Accident Fund building in Lansing.

Independent Living Client of the Year

Elza Bryan is a very active retiree from the University of Michigan. She is an energetic self-starter who, after having been provided teaching services by an

MCB independent living specialist and the MCB Training Center in Kalamazoo, went on to do many things on her own. She is now very active in her local support group and serves as a peer counselor at the Turner Geriatric Center in Ann Arbor. Elza also serves on the board of the Library of Michigan Services for the Blind and Physically Impaired Consumer Involvement Committee and is a member of the Washtenaw County Library Book Club committee. She was recently selected to serve on the MCB Consumer Involvement Council where she will work with others in an advisory capacity to the MCB.

Employer of the Year

Target Inc. of Ann Arbor was selected as Employer of the Year. In this partnership Target has

continues on page 13

Michigan DDS hosts Social Security advisors

Advisors came to Michigan to get input on new process

By Carrie Dunkle, R. N.
Disability Determination Service
Telephone (313) 256-2375

DETROIT—When the U. S. Congress passed 1994 legislation establishing the Social Security Administration as an independent agency it created a seven-member bipartisan advisory board. The board advises the president, members of Congress and Social Security commissioner on matters relating to Social Security and SSI.

The advisory board visited Michigan Disability Determination Service (DDS) last fall, prompted by the designation of Michigan as a “disability prototype” state. Their objective was to obtain reactions and feedback from our management and staff regarding implementation of the new disability redesign prototype process for persons filing for federal disability benefits.

Up to 100 DDS staff members offered input through individual interviews, meetings and videotapes. Staff members included managers, disability examiners, quality assurance, administrative support and medical personnel.

Following their two-day visits advisory board members shared the results with Social Security Administrator Kenneth Apfel. They expressed concerns for SSA consideration including:

- Challenges to DDS employees in implementing changes, or “culture change”.

- The need for Social Security Administration guidance.

- Concern about the impact of workloads.

“The cooperative spirit with which the employees in Michigan are addressing the challenges before them impressed us,” said the report. “We greatly appreciated the thoughtful and candid contributions of the many individuals who contributed to our visit.”



Front row seated l-r: George Schuette and Beverly Rollins (Social Security advisors), Lural Baltimore and Jack Dalton of DDS. Standing l-r: Otis Kern of DDS, Margaret Malone, Lori Hanson and Stanford Ross of Social Security, Linda Dorn of DDS, Martha Keys (Social Security), David Ludington of DDS and David Warner from Social Security.

Commissioner honored

Emile Najm was feted during the Michigan Commission for the Blind meeting Feb. 22 in Lansing when his term as MCB commissioner expired. “Mr. Najm has been actively involved in the development of agency policy and served on the strategic planning technology subcommittee,” said MCB director Patrick Cannon. “In addition to his activities of the commission, Mr. Najm has been employed at Chrysler Corporation as an engineer for many years.” In the photo, MCB commissioner Velma Allen, Ph. D. presents Najm with a certificate of appreciation from the FIA and Office of the Governor.



MCB 1999 awards *continued from page 12*

hired several individuals who are blind and several other individuals with other disabilities. The retailer’s willingness to hire individuals who are blind into entry-level positions has been most beneficial. It allowed several of our clients to overcome their lack of knowledge of the working world. Quite often young persons who are blind are unable to experience jobs such as paper routes and other jobs that many youngsters

come across. Target fills a much-needed niche in the lives of those persons lacking work experience. Accepting the award was Kevin O’Callahan, himself a former client of the Michigan Commission for the Blind, who is personnel officer for Target Inc. in Ann Arbor. O’Callahan is proof Target is open to hiring individuals in higher level jobs, providing upward mobility and career advancement for all employees.

Transitional housing grants awarded

Nearly \$3 million in new grant funds available

16 providers serving 25 counties to help victims of domestic abuse

Victims of domestic violence will benefit from \$2.9 million in grants to Michigan communities that support housing pilot projects for adult victims of domestic violence and their children.

Sixteen community-based organizations representing 25 counties received awards totaling \$2,897,558. Gov. John Engler made the announcement March 10.

“Housing assistance is an important element in our welfare reform program for the new millennium,” said Engler. “These funds will help domestic violence survivors and their children become more stable and help them pursue their dreams.”

The program will provide safe, single family occupancy dwellings, support services and resources to move domestic violence survivors and their dependent children to safe, affordable and permanent housing.

Support services will include assistance securing employment, child care and transportation, individual and group support, parenting education and children’s services. The program was part of the governor’s budget address. Engler introduced other housing assistance in his fiscal year 2001 budget proposal, now being debated in the state Legislature.

The transitional program funds are authorized through the Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board, a state entity administered through the Family Independence Agency. The board supports the work of community domestic violence shelters. The program is funded through federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, funds.



“To obtain and maintain employment, it is essential that families have access to quality, affordable housing,” said Family Independence Agency director Douglas E. Howard. “Most people need immediate help with transportation and child care to join the work force. Later, they may need things like counseling or peer assistance.

“In the long term, housing is an essential need for family stability. This is especially true for families disrupted because of domestic violence.”

Under federal TANF rules, the transitional housing program can use funds to pay for actual rental costs, insurance to cover assets, certain operational costs such as utilities and janitorial service, normal maintenance and repair.

“This program will become a great help for families that have encountered domestic violence who

are TANF-eligible,” said James A. Fink, chairperson of the Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board. “It will enable us to provide more important and timely services to Michigan citizens.”

Engler also introduced a \$25 million Michigan Affordable Housing Fund in the fiscal 2001 budget. Using federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds, the recommendation would support funding to increase homeownership among low-income families.

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority would administer that program. It would support lease-to-purchase programs, Habitat for Humanity, support for housing developers and other innovative home ownership programs.

Agencies receiving funds under the domestic violence transitional program, counties served and grant amounts are cited on page 15.

Bounce back from offensive behavior

By Lisa A. Beach

■ Reprinted with permission from *Team Leader*, Copyright 2000, by Dartnell, 747 Dresher Rd., P. O. Box 980, Horsham, Penn. 19044-0980. All rights reserved. For more information on this or other products published by Dartnell please call 800-621-5463 ext. 567.

No one likes to think of himself as a jerk. That's a label you throw on other people, right? But if you seem to lose talented people or notice that others feel uncomfortable in your presence, you might want to take a hard look at your behavior. "A jerk is anyone who doesn't do unto others as they would do unto themselves," said Beverly Kaye. "A jerk is anyone who brings a 'got-you' attitude to work, who sees team members as task-doers rather than human beings." Take heart, because we're all jerks some of the time, such as when we're having a bad day. But when you regularly jump into "jerk mode" and it negatively affects those you work with, you need to make changes. Kaye says:

Define the jerk-like behaviors you exhibit and how often they occur. To assess your "jerk quotient" review some of the offensive behaviors. If you exhibit one or more jerk-like behaviors on a regular basis you need to change. Start with: **Asking for honest feedback.** Sometimes it's hard to see your own faults, so it might help to get input from others. Ask directly by saying, "Is there anything I could do to make your work here more enjoyable?" Or try using "360-degree feedback" to receive anonymous feedback from anyone you interact with in the work environment.

Listen for the answer. When you do get feedback, really listen. Don't react defensively by blaming or by saying, "Yes, but ..." to excuse or defend your behavior.

Ask yourself, "What's in it for me?" It might motivate you to see how a positive behavior change would benefit you, such as knowing your team will be more productive if you treat members with more respect.

Starting small. Target two or three behaviors that you want to change. (Tip: Choose behaviors that at least three people have said to you, "This drives me crazy.")

Getting caught in the act. Become aware of these bad habits as they occur and say, "Whoops! I'm sorry."

Acting the opposite. For example, if you only criticize others, try instead to only praise them.

Evaluating your progress. Pick three people to work as your "evaluators." After you've made some efforts to change, ask them to tell you how you're doing. To succeed at changing your behavior, Kaye advises, you must really *want* to change. Don't change to appease others—do it for *you*.

Source: Beverly Kaye, co-author of *Love 'em or Lose 'em: Getting Good People to Stay* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc. 1999)

Transitional Housing Grants

Agency and location	Count(ies) covered	Contact person	Telephone	Amount
Domestic Violence Project Inc., Ann Arbor	Washtenaw	Susan McGee	734-973-0242	\$164,223
Human Development Commission, Caro	Huron, Sanilac, Tuscola	Mary Ann Vandemark	517-673-4121	\$129,168
SIREN-Eaton Shelter, Charlotte	Eaton	Nancy Oliver	517-543-4915	\$104,222
YWCA Interim House, Detroit	Wayne	Chatelah Brown	313-862-3580	\$354,000
Women's Justice Center, Detroit	Wayne	Norma Tucker	313-371-3985	\$146,000
YWCA of Grand Rapids	Kent	Eileen McKeever	616-459-7062	\$218,158
Center for Women in Transition, Holland	Allegan and Ottawa	Donna Cornwell	616-355-9750	\$176,993
Livingston Area Council Against Spouse Abuse, Howell	Livingston	Deborah Felder-Smith	517-548-1350	\$150,000
AWARE Inc., Jackson	Jackson	Shirley Pascal	517-783-2660	\$115,208
Women's Center, Marquette	Alger and Marquette	Suzanne Kensington	906-225-1346	\$150,000
YMCA Domestic Assault Program, Kalamazoo	Kalamazoo	Barbara Mills	616-385-2869	\$296,617
Lighthouse PATH, Pontiac	Oakland	Wanda Sandifer	248-335-1950	\$200,156
Underground Railroad, Saginaw	Saginaw	Valerie Hoffman	517-755-0413	\$140,150
Relief After Violent Encounter, St. Johns	Clinton and Shiawassee	Cheryl Rogers	517-224-4662	\$249,699
Domestic Assault Shelter Coalition, Three Rivers	Cass, Van Buren and St. Joseph	Patricia Hillmann	616-279-5122	\$104,616
Women's Resource Center of Grand Traverse Area, Traverse City	Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau	Mary Lee Lord	231-941-1210	\$198,408

It happens every spring

**Like baseball, butterflies and flowers, “zeroes” pile up this time of year
Project Zero sites number 34 through 42 reach successful benchmark**

Spring’s rite of “zero” happened nine times in February and March, as Project Zero programs from Bellaire to Detroit reached zero. “Zero” is the point in time when all target FIP cases in the district are working and earning income. Project Zero measures “target” cases—those of more than 60 days’ duration that are required to participate in Work First, obtain work and acquire earned income.

“Congratulations to our directors, their staff and community partners, all of whom have done a splendid job,” said FIA director Douglas E. Howard. “Project Zero is doing the job for our customers everywhere.”

The Wayne County Greydale district in Detroit reached “zero” Feb. 29. Greydale joined Project Zero in October 1997 having 3,312 target cases and 2,458 having no earned income. After 29 months of steady decline, Greydale hit zero cases without earned income.

“It took a total team effort, which included our staff and managers, plus every job developer, placement coordinator, case manager and Project Zero coordinator at Ross Innovative Employment Solutions and Resource Network, our two Work First partners,” said Greydale district manager Don Mussen.

In conjunction with its Work First partners, Greydale plans to expand services to assist with job retention and career advancement for working families and to focus additional efforts on assisting those currently deferred from work. “Reaching zero unemployed customers was just the beginning in moving people toward self-responsibility,”

said Greydale Project Zero coordinator Cassandra Kinloch. “I now look forward to moving people toward total independence.”



Don Mussen



Linda Albig

dedicated staff and our partners at South Central Michigan Works, Lenawee Transportation and the Child Care Network,” said acting county FIA director Linda Albig.

The Wayne County Fullerton-Jeffries district reached “zero” March 1. The district joined Project Zero in October 1998 when it had 1,581 targeted cases and 983 had no earned income.

“Our partnerships with business, educational institutions, faith-based organizations and community associations helped tremendously as we removed barriers to employment and strengthened families in the community,” said district manager Josh Mack. “We have important Work First partners in Project GET, the Franklin Adult Education Center and the Detroit Entrepreneurial Institute.”

Cass County joined Project

Zero in October 1999 and had 69 target cases, 19 without earnings. “Our success was a result of cooperation, shared responsibility and shared glory with our Work First partner—the Lewis Cass Intermediate School District,” said Cass County FIA director Chris Kadulski. “Together with the Berrien-Cass-Van Buren Office of Michigan Works we shared a collective goal and vision.”

Kadulski praised his staff, especially his FIS. “Everybody did a heck of a job. No one was selfish, no one cared who got the credit. Our family independence specialists and managers worked very well with our customers and achieved everyone’s goals.



Chris Kadulski

“Our accomplishment was aided by the previous success of our Michigan Works Agency in Berrien County. They were very responsive to our workers and we enjoyed excellent communications.

The Wayne County Magnolia District reached zero on March 9, 18 months after having joined Project Zero in October 1998 with 947 target cases and 517 that did not have earned income. Acting district manager Janet McCloskey—Magnolia’s program manager who is doing double duty while Ed Ayoub is on sick leave—said the hard work of FIA and Work First staff and new community partnerships produced their accomplishment.

“Our staff did exemplary work, particularly our family indepen-

dence managers, family independence specialists and Project Zero coordinator," she said. "Everyone at Work First was wonderful, too."

The Magnolia District is a multicultural neighborhood. It serves low-income African-American, Hispanic, Arabic and Romanian customers. "We extensively used the services of our Work First partner, Sermetro, and the Arab-American and Chaldean Council," said McCloskey. "We developed a partnership with Lutheran Social Services who helped us serve Romanian refugees and Shi'ite Muslim refugees from Iraq." Shi'ite Muslims are members of the Islamic religion.

Antrim County and its partner county, Kalkaska, both reached zero March 16 (both reached the goal in late 1999 without notice). The Antrim-Kalkaska County partnership joined Project Zero in October 1999. Antrim-Kalkaska FIA director Fred Harris said the reaching zero was the result of dedication and faithful attention to task.

"We have a hard-working staff who work closely with customers and Work First partners," he said. "Our staff and our partners deserve the credit for this achievement."

Antrim-Kalkaska FIA Project Zero coordinator Deb Hahnenberg mirrored the sentiment. "Both counties have excellent FIS staff who work well with our customers," she said. "We also have a fabulous director who supports our work. Our Work First partners are awesome. We have a very good relationship with our Michigan Works Agency, which helps very much.

"Our FIS staff deserve special credit for their work in Antrim

County, said Hahnenberg.

"We had several uncooperative, hard-to-serve cases that required attention. We were able to use a policy pilot to encourage their participation. It had a significant impact."



Fred Harris



Josh Mack

Barbara Madison said going from 420 target cases without earnings to zero in six months was the result of a unique programmatic partnership between FIA staff and county partners.

"We worked with our three Work First partners to give each target customer an individual conference," she said. "Each conference included our family independence specialist and manager on the case, and the Work First job coach and job developer. They worked individually with each customer to remove all barriers to work, then the Michigan Works Agency made a bona fide job offer to the customer."

Madison said this agreement was satisfactory in meeting everyone's goals, including Inkster's three Work First contractors: ACCESS, Employment and Training Designs Inc. and Starfish Family Services.

The Inkster District serves

Western Wayne County cities of Inkster, Dearborn and Dearborn Heights. It serves a multiracial, multicultural and diverse economic caseload. "Prior to joining Project Zero our district already had a high percentage of target families with earned income," said Madison. "Through Project Zero our Work First partners were able to help our two-parents family customers upgrade and get better-paying jobs.

"Our staff did a wonderful job," she said. "They provided a level and quantity of personal interaction with customers that is, I am told, unmatched in our county. Our staff and Work First partners spent so much time with people on a one-to-one basis that we became one in the minds of our customers."

Oakland County became the 42nd site to reach zero March 29.



Gerald Hall

Oakland County joined in October 1999 with 1,248 target cases and 431 reporting no earned income. "Achieving Zero at multiple sites

all on the same day is monumental," said Oakland County FIA director Gerald Hall, making reference to the county's four FIP district offices each showing zero cases without earnings that day.

"I think the staff and each district manager did a tremendous job," he said. "Along with our community partners, this community pulled together to make our customers winners. What a wonderful accomplishment for Oakland County families."

Michigan gets federal transit grant for welfare to work

**10 agencies to receive operating funds and equipment
More than \$850,000 to be distributed**

Michigan Department of Transportation will distribute \$851,190 in federal grant money to fund 10 bus transit projects to help welfare recipients and other low-income workers get to and from work.

A partnership of MDOT, the Family Independence Agency, the Michigan Department of Career Development and local communities will produce matching funds in the amount of \$940,579, for a total expenditure of nearly \$2 million. Governor John Engler made the announcement March 7.

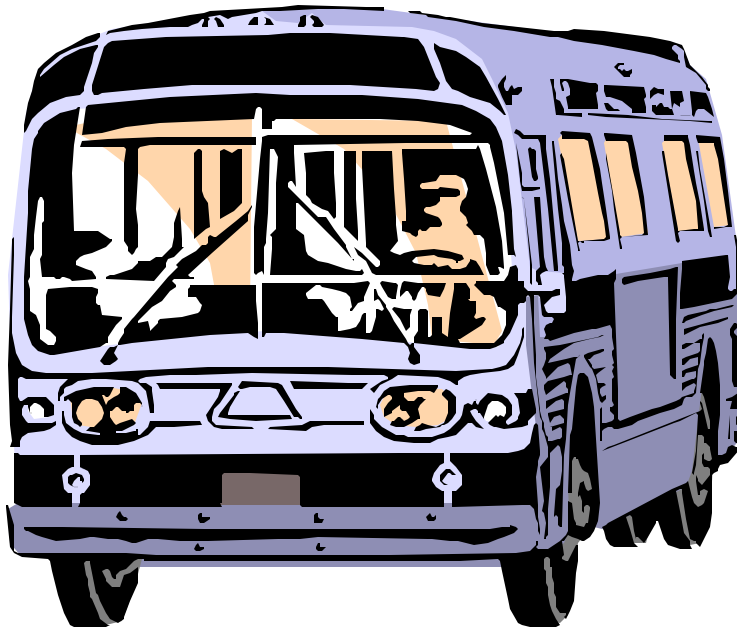
"Transportation is a crucial link that helps people move from public assistance to the independence of employment," Engler said. "We are committed to developing services that are flexible and help people get to and from their jobs, as well as to day care facilities and job training. Our efforts should help keep Michigan in the national forefront of welfare reform."

The 10 projects funded in Michigan are part of the Federal Transit Administration's new Job Access and Reverse Commute Program, which is designed to assist states and localities in developing more flexible transportation services.

"The real issue here is helping people continue to improve their circumstances. I'm pleased that MDOT can partner with other state agencies and local providers to bring these new services to our custom-

ers," said state Transportation Director Jim DeSana.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) authorized the Job Access program to provide competitive grants to assist in developing flexible transportation services. Services may include shuttles, van pools, new bus routes, connector services to mass transit



and guaranteed ride home programs.

The Reverse Commute program, also authorized in TEA-21, provides transportation services to suburban employment centers from urban, rural and other suburban locations for all populations. The following providers will receive Job Access and Reverse Commute Program funding:

■ Alger County Transit Authority to receive \$60,000 for expansion of services during weekends and evenings.

■ Allegan County Board of Commis-

sioners to receive \$336,588 for the purchase of one van, one small bus, operating costs of expanded service and computer communication needs.

■ Barry County Board of Commissioners to receive \$60,000 for expansion of services and upgrade of one vehicle.

■ Bay Area Transportation Authority (including Benzie and Leelanau

counties) to receive \$125,000 for operating costs and one new vehicle.

■ Charlevoix County Board of Commissioners to receive \$75,000 to add new service to the Regional Ride and purchase one new vehicle.

■ Eaton County Transportation Authority to receive \$162,490 for purchase of a bus and operating costs of expanded service.

■ City of Ionia to receive \$230,131 for expansion of service to Saranac and Belding,

add new service to Grand Rapids and purchase two buses.

■ Ludington Mass Transportation Authority (including Lake, Mason and Oceana counties) to receive \$300,000 to purchase three buses and operating costs for the additional services.

■ Midland County Board of Commissioners to receive \$142,560 for purchase of one van, computer equipment, and operating costs of expanded service.

■ Van Buren Board of Commissioners to receive \$300,000 for expansion of existing brokerage service to Cass and Van Buren counties.

Counties cited for awards at director's meeting

"Cheeri-O" and "Yo-Yo" awards on the agenda for first time Commission noted for 50 years of service

LANSING—FIA local offices and units received awards at the statewide directors meeting Feb. 8. FIA director Douglas E. Howard bestowed the first-time awards for various service achievements.

"It's great that we can get together and share our ideas about meeting the many challenges facing our agency," said Howard. "But it's also appropriate to celebrate our many accomplishments."

Adoption Achievement Awards

Howard presented awards to a number of counties. "This is the first year we have recognized the accomplishments of adoption staff in individual counties," said Howard.

"In fiscal year 1999, 76 adoption staff were allocated to 28 counties and Zones 1 and 2 and it was the first year the FIA exceeded 1,000 adoptive placements or finalizations."

Berrien and Jackson counties received special awards for efforts to place children photolisted with the Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange.

Other adoption achievement awards were presented to Hillsdale-Branch and St. Clair County FIA for having more than 30 adoptions in 1999 while eight other FIA offices (Allegan, Calhoun, Genesee, Midland, Muskegon, Ottawa, Saginaw-Bay and St. Joseph-Cass) received awards for 20 or more. Bay and Saginaw counties have since that time been declared separate administrative entities.

Five other counties (Kalamazoo, Lenawee, Midland, Monroe and Tuscola) received awards for completing 70 percent of their adoptive placements within 12

months of permanent custody.

Child safety and permanency plan awards

Howard said the goal of the child safety and permanency plan is to develop high quality, effective, in-home and community programs that are available as alternatives to out-of-home placements for children.

"Since its inception 17 counties have been able to effectively reduce their abuse and neglect out of home care population," he said.

"This year, a new permanency planning process was implemented that is simpler and tied to performance outcomes and indicators. A high quality process fosters collaboration both within the agency and with community partners."

Howard recognized children's services staff from the Delta, Houghton, Keweenaw, Montmorency and Oscoda counties, as well as Lake-Oceana-Mason FIA for their combined plans.

"Our philosophy is to promote inhome family preservation efforts whenever it is safe to do so," said Howard. "We commend these counties and others who have been able to utilize the child safety and permanency plan process in effective and safe ways."

Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns got an award for providing a **half-century of service** to Michigan citizens. "It's a great pleasure to recognize the commission's 50 years of service to persons with disabilities," said Howard.

Project Zero awards

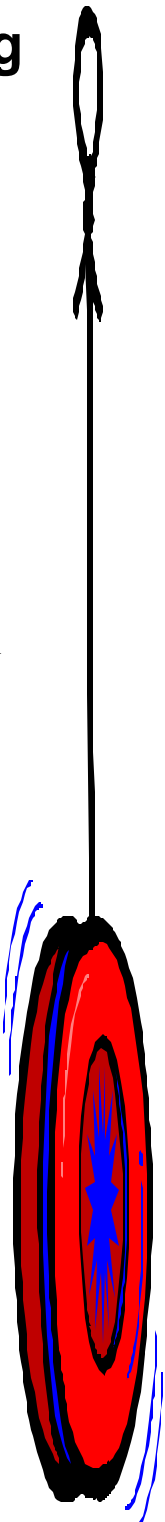
"Our Project Zero sites are the jewel in the crown of Michigan's welfare reform initiatives," said

Howard, beginning a sequence of awards to those counties. "Today, we have some fun Project Zero presentations for sites that reached zero more than once."

He presented **Cheeri-O Awards** to counties or districts that hit "zero" at least once in four or more consecutive months through January 2000. Those FIA county offices include Berrien (4 months), Gladwin (4), Grand Traverse (4), Newaygo (7), Wexford-Missaukee (4), Manistee (11), Newaygo (7), Lake-Mason (8), Oceana (8) and Benzie-Leelanau (13).

Howard presented **Yo-Yo Awards** to counties or districts who have hit two or more times but not consecutively through January 2000. This group includes Alger (2 hits), Antrim (2), Kalkaska (2), Eaton (2), Presque Isle (2), Barry (3), Midland (3), Charlevoix (6) and Emmet (9) counties and the Wayne County Forest-Ellery (2) and Romulus (2) districts.

During each presentation county directors were awarded plaques, certificates, yo-yos, Frisbees, handshakes thanks and applause.



FIA awards \$47,500 for new juvenile justice focus

Balanced and restorative justice is the topic 19 communities will implement the new idea of juvenile justice

LANSING – Nineteen Michigan counties have been awarded \$2,500 each to endorse the precepts of “balanced and restorative justice” in their communities.

The counties were awarded technical assistance and training funds to promote the alternative juvenile justice philosophy through educational and other activities.

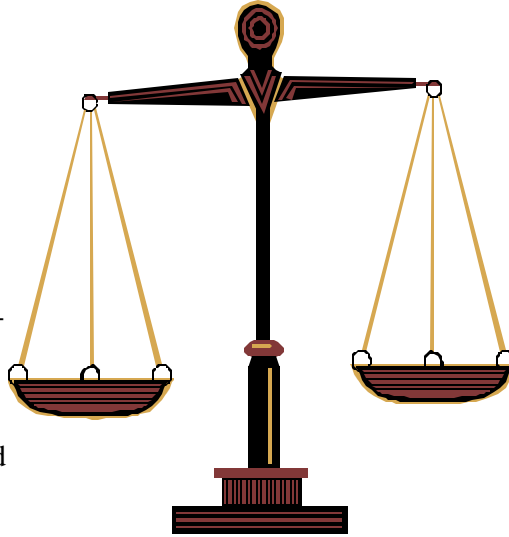
“In 1998, the Family Independence Agency adopted balanced and restorative justice as the preferred context for juvenile justice services,” said FIA director Douglas E. Howard March 7. “These grants will help carry out the philosophy in Michigan.”

Howard said restorative justice focuses on holding offenders accountable to their victims for the harm they have caused. It differs substantially from “retributive” justice, or justice based solely on trial and imprisonment.

“In restorative justice victims, offenders and affected communities play key roles in achieving justice through reparation of the harm caused by crime,” he said.

The following counties were awarded funds: Allegan, Baraga, Barry, Cass, Delta, Genesee, Houghton, Ingham, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Keweenaw, Muskegon, Newaygo, Ogemaw, Ontonagon, Roscommon, Schoolcraft, Washtenaw and Wayne. It is expected Bay County will be awarded funding later this spring, as well.

Teams from each county have developed and will implement plans to advance restorative justice in their communities. Two members of each team attended 36 hours of FIA-sponsored training in March using a



comprehensive curriculum developed by the National Institute of Justice.

The Family Independence Agency is Michigan’s public child welfare agency. It operates six residential juvenile treatment institutions with 770 beds for youngsters referred from courts. The agency also supports community-based programs for juveniles.

To be eligible for this funding communities established local planning teams that include crime victims, former juvenile offenders, law enforcement, juvenile justice practitioners and members of the community-at-large. Local services to be provided include speaker’s bureaus, presentations by experts and public service announcements.

“This funding will support local community education focused on increasing the awareness of balanced and restorative justice philosophy and practices,” said Howard.

“The quality of applications indicates a strong commitment to

restorative justice,” said Howard. “In applying for funds communities showed their creativity, energy and commitment to deal effectively with the challenges of juvenile justice.”

For more information on local programs please contact the representative listed for each county.

Allegan County
Robin Lyons, Allegan
Telephone (616) 686-4628
Fax (616) 673-5875

Baraga, Houghton, Ontonagon,
Keweenaw
Rev. John E. Niemela, Houghton
Telephone (906) 482-9230 or (906) 482-3780
Fax (906) 482-9230

Barry County
Robert F. Nida, Hastings
Telephone (616) 948-4842
Fax (616) 948-3322

Cass County
Ruth Andrews, Cassopolis
Telephone (616) 445-5019
Fax (616) 445-5836

Delta County
Mary McCune, Escanaba
Telephone (906) 789-9580
Fax (906) 786-5853

Genesee County
Sheryl Thompson, Flint
Telephone (810) 760-2361

Ingham County
Leah K Harris, Lansing
Telephone (517) 482-4161
Fax (517) 482-0020

continues on page 21

HHS awards FIA another \$1 million

Payment is second this fiscal year for state that exceeded adoption goals

LANSING—Governor John Engler said the Family Independence Agency was awarded more than \$1 million in February for exceeding adoption goals in 1998. The payment brings to \$2 million the total FIA received this fiscal year from the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

The Department of Health and Human Services awarded Michigan \$1,061,446 for its work placing state wards into adoption. Thirty-five states received similar payments and only four were greater than Michigan's.

Late last year, the FIA received a \$942,554 payment and in turn awarded \$540,619 to 22 Michigan agencies to provide community-based post-adoption services. Remaining funds have been set aside for camp scholarships for children, to support a statewide adoption conference, adoptive parent and professional staff training on adoption issues.

It is expected the FIA will award more community-based grants later this year. A work group comprised of representatives from public and private adoption agencies and adoptive parents will establish areas of need and make recommendations to the FIA.

"This award indicates Michigan is a national leader in helping unite state wards with permanent loving families," said Engler March 22. "The federal government offered this reward for states that work well to move children from foster care to adoption. It means we are among the best states at that practice."

The FIA earned the \$2 million incentive payment by increasing adoptions during fiscal year 1998—the period from October 1997 through September 1998. Under terms of the incentive program, states are paid a set amount based on each state ward adoption finalized after the state reaches a baseline requirement.

In Michigan, the 1998 baseline number was 1,905—determined by averaging the number of adoptions finalized in the state for each year during the three fiscal year period 1995-97. The state exceeded that by more than 300 in fiscal 1998, therefore qualifying for the incentive payment.

"The award is based on adoptions for state wards, children who entered the state foster care system usually because of abuse or neglect in their birth homes," said Family Independence Agency director Douglas E. Howard. "We don't know what our incentive benchmark will be for 1999, but we have already surpassed our prior year total for final adoption placements."

Howard said Michigan finalized 2,417 adoptions in the 1999 fiscal year.

The federal government made the incentive payment program part of the national "Adoption 2002" initiative. The goal is to double the number of adoptions nationwide between 1996 and 2002. Funding for the incentive program is an outgrowth of the 1997 federal Adoption and Safe Families Act.

Balanced and restorative justice grants

continued from page 20

Jackson County
Brian D. Philson, Jackson
Telephone (517) 768-2741
Fax (517) 788-4661

Newaygo County
Bruce Youker, White Cloud
Telephone (231) 689-7278
Fax (231) 689-7276

Schoolcraft County
Lucy Olson, Manistique
Telephone (906) 341-2144
Fax (906) 341-3071

Kalamazoo County
Tammy Woodhams, Kalamazoo
Telephone (616) 383-6443
Fax (616) 373-0475

Ogemaw County
Margaret Olesnavage, West Branch
Telephone (517) 345-5915
Fax (517) 345-5901

Washtenaw County
Donna White, Ann Arbor
Telephone (734) 971-2767
Fax (734) 971-5084

Muskegon County
Brian Mattson, Muskegon
Telephone (231) 724-6234

Roscommon County
Judge Douglas C. Dosson, Roscommon
Telephone (517) 275-4620
Fax (517) 275-8537

Wayne County
Carlita Wilson, Detroit
Telephone (313) 833-3475
Fax (313) 833-3630

Warren-Conner celebrated “zero”

Formerly blighted neighborhood met benchmark achievement

DETROIT—The Wayne County FIA Warren-Conner district office, a Project Zero site since 1997, celebrated achieving “zero” Feb. 23 at an event in St. Maron Catholic Church. Warren-Conner reached “zero” last Dec. 21.

“Skeptics said that no Wayne County district would ever achieve zero, but Warren-Conner is the sixth district in Wayne County to achieve zero,” said Jerome Rutland, Wayne County FIA director.

The Warren-Conner area was a blighted neighborhood that lies within the Detroit Empowerment Zone.

“Because of the collaborative efforts of the Warren-Conner FIA District and all of the community partners, the area has seen significant revitalization,” said Wanda Bailey, FIA Zone 7 manager. Bailey was previously the Warren-Conner district manager.

“Reaching zero is the result of a lot of hard work by FIA staff, community partners and our customers who want to work.”

Bailey praised the effort of community partners and employers including the city of Detroit, Diversified Educational Services Work First subcontractor, Michigan Community Coordinated Child Care, the Warren-Conner Development Coalition and the Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce Job Ladder Program.

The district hosted job fairs in October, November and December with local employers recruiting prospective employees. The district also dispatched “Special Worker Assistance Teams” to customer homes to advise them of job opportunities.

“The job fairs focused on



Celebrating zero (l-r): Jerome Rutland, Wanda Bailey, Warren-Conner Project Zero coordinator Cheryl Bellomy and acting district manager Sharon Jackson, Doug Howard.

East Side employers, including those in Roseville, Warren and Mt. Clemens,” said Cheryl Bellomy, Warren-Conner Project Zero coordi-

nator. “They showed us that there’s a lot going on in the Empowerment Zone where the partners have a common focus on employment.”

Redford celebrated zero March 30

The Wayne County FIA Redford District celebrated hitting “zero” March 30 at an event at Joy Manor in Westland. Redford reached “zero” on Jan. 19. The Redford District serves the western Wayne County communities of Livonia, Garden City, Plymouth, Redford, Dearborn Heights and part of Detroit. It was the eighth Wayne County site to reach zero.

“I am a firm believer in working hard and celebrating success,” said FIA director Howard, “and I am pleased to be a part of this.”

Phillip Kwierant, who retired as Redford’s district manager Feb. 1, said the district was using Project Zero methodology prior to officially becoming a pilot site in 1999. Kwierant, who was Redford’s district manager since 1988 said the staff worked hard to reach Zero before his last day on the job. Kwierant said the district reached the goal quickly because of the efforts of the Redford staff and their Work First partners, the Resource Network in Redford, ACCESS in Dearborn (an Arab-American service provider) and Employment Training Development Inc. from Wayne.

Acting district manager Robert Wylie said job fairs helped unemployed customers find local jobs. The Resource Network, a community partner, lined up employers and the district got its customers to attend. “Many of our customers secured new jobs at the job fairs which resulted in us being able to close their cases,” Wylie said.

Redford customers tend to be homeowners with strong support networks, making issues such as transportation and child care less critical than in other areas without well-developed community support systems, Wylie said.

Engler announces \$345,000 in child care grants

**118 licensed and registered providers across the state receive funds
EQUIP grant programs helps build infant, weekend & evening service**

Governor John Engler on March 20 announced \$345,000 in new grants to child care providers around Michigan. Grants were awarded only to licensed or registered providers who serve children from low-income families subsidized by the Family Independence Agency.

"These grants will provide greater licensed child care options for low-income persons," said Governor John Engler. "They will help provide safe, licensed environments for parents who are pursuing their economic dreams in the Michigan workforce."

The grant program, called Enhanced Quality Improvement Program or EQUIP, is targeted to increase the quality and quantity of child care in Michigan. Special focus is on increasing infant and toddler care, care for children with special needs, and care during non-traditional working hours.

One hundred eighteen applicants secured grant awards ranging from \$615 to \$3,500. Lansing-based Michigan 4C Association, the leader in the field of child care resource and referral services, awarded the grants.

Funded proposals address issues including equipment to increase or improve care or child development, or to improve sleeping arrangements for second and third shift care; computers and age-appropriate software; fences, railings, safety gates, and car seats to address health and safety; resources to improve staff knowledge; barrier-free enhancements and equipment for special needs care.

■ A review of grantees, grant amounts, service coverage areas and funding uses can be located on the FIA public website at: www.mfia.state.mi.us/RELEASES/govnews.htm

Providers say EQUIP grants make a big difference

Information: Lois Brennan

Telephone (517) 335-3495

Can a grant of \$3,500 or less make a difference in the way a small business operator manages his or her business? Child care providers who received EQUIP grants say so. Here are comments from past grantees who reported their progress to the FIA Child Care and Development unit.

"The children love the new playground equipment. I am very proud to show parents (and) to say that my home is accessible to special needs children." Theresa Wimper, Ottawa County.

"I was able to purchase items. As a result, I have two special needs children, two more 2nd shift children and an infant in the works. I purchased furniture and a playground which the children love along with a child picnic table and teeter-totter." Kassundra Branch, Kent County.

"I have three infants in my care, 4 special needs children and am a 24-hour (provider). This grant freed up money for educational equipment and gave parents peace of mind." Mary DeNittis, Ionia County.

"We have new fences going up, new playground equipment (and) providers spending time with the children." Erin Antisdell, Cass County.

"Children have more variety in their play. It allowed me to have a safer environment. My operation is important to me and this allowed me to run it more safely and with a little more class." Kelly Lamont, Bay County.

"I am able to take children at any time day or night, something not offered by many day care providers in my area. The children are happier. I interviewed a mother last week who decided to bring her children here after looking into my back yard." Anita Norberg, Muskegon County.

"My children love the new equipment and activities. The equipment is age appropriate and set up for easy access by the children. I have another infant opening and feel better about the sleeping arrangements for later night time care." Julie McDonald, Chippewa County.

"The safety of the new egress window has made a huge (safety) difference. The play equipment has been a good source of fun and education for the children." Cheryl Adame, Oceana County.

"The children want to spend more time outdoors. There seem to be fewer behavioral problems." Sally Cepeda, Sanilac County.

"The quality of my program has increased tenfold. The children, parents and I are all much happier." Christal Kramer, Ingham County.

"I meet so many more needs with the ramp, new bath and new warmer play room. My parents love it all. I got two more special needs children because of the work done." Debra Burns, Sanilac County.

"The children and staff are so proud of the way the center looks. Staff morale is very high. This has been a very positive experience for everyone involved." Animal Crackers Center, Kent County.

Michigan shared the warmth in February

Promotion between FIA and Hardee's raised \$776 for FIA heating assistance coffers Upper Peninsula counties participated in first-time event in Michigan

The FIA and 10 other Snow Belt states participated in a promotion with Hardee's stores in February to raise funds and channel them to county heating assistance funds. The first-time event in Michigan, called "Share the Warmth", was a partnership between Hardee's stores in the Upper Peninsula and county FIA offices.

In the promotion, states received \$1 for each sausage and egg biscuit sold Feb. 11. Participating Michigan stores included those in Escanaba, Houghton, Iron Mountain, Marquette, Munising and Manistique. Through local promotions and sales, the event raised funds and increased awareness for the need to provide heat to families who have fallen on hard times in our community. Biscuit sales announced Feb. 25 totaled \$776 in Michigan's relatively few stores.

"Hardee's saw a need in its communities and sought to partner with agencies willing to invest not only their resources but their manpower to fill a need in communities," said Dave Schauer, director of marketing for Hardee's Food Systems Inc.

Other states have participated in the event for more years and had greater sales. Minnesota, with 85 restaurants participating, raised \$17,247. Twenty-seven Iowa restaurants raised about \$14,300. Other participating states and sale figures reported include: Minnesota (\$17,247 in 85 restaurants), Iowa (\$14,300 in 27 stores), North Dakota (\$7,414 in 16 stores), Montana (\$7,179 in 16 restaurants), Wisconsin (\$9,060 in 127 restaurants), Nebraska (\$917 in 14 stores), Wyoming (\$345 in nine restaurants) and South Dakota (\$8,113 in 18 restaurants).

For more information on "Share the Warmth" contact Amy Hindman of Oklahoma City-based Jordan Associates, the agency that organized the program. Contact her by telephone (405) 507-6278; fax (405) 840-4149; email ahindman@jordanet.com; Internet: <http://www.jordanet.com>

Family Independence Agency
Office of Communications
P O Box 30037
Lansing MI 48909

Return Service Requested

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LANSING, MI
PERMIT NO. 1200

For information about FIA programs, consult our Internet web address: www.mfia.state.mi.us

The Family Independence Agency will not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, sex, religion, age, national origin, color, marital status, political beliefs or disability. If you need help with reading, writing, hearing, etc., under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are invited to make your needs known to an FIA Office in your county.